

ELA: Grade 8, Lesson 20, "The Gift of the Magi"

Lesson Focus: The focus of today's lesson will be analyzing the fictional short story text, "The Gift of the Magi" to determine the main ideas and study author's craft.

Practice Focus: Students will analyze a literary text to determine the main ideas and study author's craft.

Objective: Students will complete the story "The Gift of the Magi" and focus on the ending as they determine its theme.

Academic Vocabulary: nimble, ecstatic, yearned, singed, ardent, relate, chronicle

TN Standards: 8.RL.KID.1, 8.RL.KID.2, 8.RL.KID.3, 8.RL.CS.4, 8.W.TTP.2

Teacher Materials:

- The Teacher Packet for ELA, Grade 8, Lesson 20

Student Materials:

- Paper, a pencil, and a surface to write on
- The Student Packet for ELA, Grade 8, Lesson 20 which can be found on www.tn.gov/education

Note: Some small sections of the text have been omitted for the sake of time in this lesson.

Teacher Do	Students Do
<p>Opening (1 min)</p> <p>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 8th graders out there, though everyone is welcome to tune in. This lesson is the fifth in this week's series.</p> <p>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools. I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</p> <p>If you didn't see our previous lesson, you can find it at www.tn.gov/education. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't seen any of our others. But it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons, since today we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</p> <p>Today we will continue learning about a short story called "The Gift of the Magi"! Specifically, we will learn what surprise Jim has in store for his wife Della! We'll see not only what is in the package Jim gives Della but also how he reacts to the gift Della got him! Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper, a pencil, and a surface to write on • The Student Packet for ELA, Grade 8, Lesson 20 which can be found on www.tn.gov/education <p>Ok, let's begin!</p>	<p>Students gather materials for the lesson and prepare to engage with the lesson's content.</p>
<p>Intro (1 min)</p>	<p>Students listen to the teacher and learn an overview of the lesson.</p>

<p>Today our goal is to continue reading a short story called “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry so we can analyze the text to determine its meaning. We have been reading this text for several lessons already. Because this is a longer text, I had to cut out a few portions of it so we can be sure to finish it. But don’t worry, you’ll still have everything you need to understand it.</p> <p>We will begin today with me reading portions of the text and then we will reread it and pause along the way for deeper understanding. At the end of the lesson, I will assign you independent work you can complete after the video ends.</p>	
<p>Teacher Model/Read-Aloud (20 min) [Show Slide 1.] Based on the plot and character development, what do you think will happen next In O. Henry’s short story, “The Gift of the Magi”? Write a narrative in which you create a possible ending for the story. Be sure to use the same literary devices that O. Henry uses and keep in mind what you already know about the characters.</p> <p>So how did your story end? You could have written all sorts of things, and we don’t have time to explore every possibility here. But let’s take a moment to review what you wrote and make sure it responds to the prompt.</p> <p>Take a look back at your ending to the story. [Pause.] [Show Slide 2.] First, we want to make sure it matches what we read of the story in terms of plot and character. We know from the past few lessons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim and Della are poor, but they work hard and are happy in their relationship. • Della is persistent when she wants something, and she wants to get Jim a very nice Christmas gift. • Jim used to have a better job than he does now, so they haven’t always struggled this much. • They are very proud of two things: Jim’s beautiful watch, and Della’s beautiful hair. <p>Did your ending take these details into account? Were the Jim and Della in your ending the same Jim and Della the author created, or did they act out of character? [Pause.]</p> <p>Second, how does your language compare to O. Henry’s? He is a famous author, of course, so we can’t expect to sound exactly like he does. That’s why I’m not sharing a model response with you—I know I couldn’t come close to writing</p>	<p>Students will read about the gift Jim has bought for Della, as well as how he reacts to the gift Della bought him.</p>

like O. Henry! But I hope you tried a few techniques we've seen in his writing. Did you use any similes or metaphors—comparisons that make description more vivid for the reader? For example, you may have said Jim's watch shone bright like the sun, or Della's hair was as long and wavy as the ocean. Look back at your work and see how careful and interesting your choices of words were. [Pause.]

If you have a chance, read what you wrote out loud to someone and see what they think! I wish I could read all of your work, but let's go ahead and see how O. Henry's version of the story ends. Remember that he is famous for his clever and surprising endings!

As a reminder, although the events of the story—its plot—are fairly easy to understand, the author tells this simple story in a complex way. Sometimes telling things in a more complex way gives those things layers of meaning, which is important because the more layers of meaning there are to dig into, the more we learn about ourselves and the world around us! And that's the challenge for us as readers! Are you up for the challenge of learning more about yourself and the world around you?

Great! Well, here's how we're going to do it. We'll only read a couple of sentences at a time and then we'll dig into the puzzle of seeing what the words mean and what the author is talking about. To help us with this, we will use the graphic organizer we used in the previous lesson to track our notes. It looks like this:

[Show Slide 3.] You can see we have certain sections on the organizer that are labeled various people or things: characters, key details, plot, vocabulary, and literary devices - which are tools like metaphors and images that the author uses to convey meaning, and themes, or important messages. This will be an important tool for us as we work through the text.

Take a minute now to make sure you have your graphic organizer from the previous lesson, or make yourself a new one if you need to. [Pause.]

Great. As we read and discuss each of these elements of the text, we will pause and give you time to write your notes on your graphic organizer.

Ok, now remember in the previous lesson we learned about Jim’s surprising reaction to Della cutting her hair. He didn’t seem angry at all; he seemed more like he went into a trance, or a daze. We know he kind of snapped out of it a bit and threw a package down onto the table. Today, we get to find out what’s in that package!

[Show Slide 4.] **“White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! A quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails”**

When you’re excited about opening a gift, does it take you several min? Or do you just rip off the wrapping and tear right into it? [Pause.] I tear it up!

[Show Slide 5.] **Now, thinking about that, what do you think is the meaning of the word “nimble” in the first sentence - “White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper?” It’s an unusually worded sentence but what do you think the word means in context? [Pause.] It means “quick in action”! In other words, she was so excited that she opened the package quickly.**

[Show Slide 6.] **Let’s take a moment to write down the word “nimble” and its meaning “quick in action” in the vocabulary section on our graphic organizer. [Pause.] Ok, let’s reread that paragraph to make sure we got it all.**

[Show Slide 7.] **“White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! A quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails”**

[Show Slide 8.] **Notice her reaction is an “ecstatic scream of joy.” Based on that reaction, what do you think the word “ecstatic” means? [Pause.]**

It means “overwhelmingly excited”! Of course! It’s a Christmas gift! Let’s write this word down in our graphic organizer, too.

[Show Slide 9.] **“Ecstatic” means “overwhelmingly excited.” [Pause.]**

[Go to slide 10.] **Ok, so she lets out an ecstatic scream of joy.**

Then the text says “and then, alas!” What in the world does “alas” mean? Well, that’s one of those older words that means very similar to saying “ugh”! Or “age”! Kind of like,

“oh no!” But why does the text say that? Well, look at the next sentence –

[Show Slide 11.] “A quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails.”

She went from being excited to bawling her eyes out! What on Earth could make her both incredibly happy AND so sad that she cries? Now it’s time to see what the gift is.

[Show Slide 12.] “For there lay The Combs - the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window.”

He gave her some really nice combs! Have you picked up on part of the twist yet? What do you do with combs? And what can you not do with combs if you don’t have much hair? There’s hardly anything to comb! And this is no ordinary set of combs either. Notice the author capitalized “The Combs.” Do you remember what else was oddly capitalized in the story? We talked about it in a previous lesson. [Pause.]

Yes, “The Watch,” Jim’s prized possession. Now we know that he capitalized The Combs not only to emphasize their importance but to signal to the reader that this gift is as valuable to Della as The Watch was valuable to Jim. It’s kind of a trick the author uses to help the reader make the connection between the objects. So let’s read those sentences again to learn more about “The Combs.”

“For there lay The Combs - the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window.”

So it’s a set of combs that Della had seen in a Broadway window. What does it mean to say “a Broadway window”?

[Show Slide 13.] [Pause.] Broadway is a famous shopping area in downtown New York City. And items are expensive in larger cities! So this is a key detail in the story as it tells us that the item is expensive and Jim likely had to sacrifice for it. Let’s add this key detail to our notes on the graphic organizer.

[Show Slide 14.] The key detail is Jim bought the combs on Broadway and the meaning is that they were expensive and he sacrificed to buy them much like Della sacrificed to buy

her gift. Take a moment to write these notes down. [Pause.] Thank you.

[Show Slide 15.] Now, remember the sentence we read said the “set of combs...that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window.” The word “worship” is most often used in religion but in this case, the author is saying Della had really intense adoration or love for this object. That means Jim did a really good job of picking out a gift! Let’s continue reading.

[Show Slide 16.] “They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers...”

So remember she had seen the combs at Broadway where items would be expensive.

[Show Slide 17.] Notice that the text says “her heart had simply craved and yearned over them...” Do you know the meaning of the word “yearned”? [Pause.] In this case, the author makes it easy for you. “Craved” and “yearned” are synonyms of each other. He uses both to add emphasis here. Take a moment and add the word “yearned” to your vocabulary list on your graphic organizer.

[Show Slide 18.] “Yearned” means “to crave or long for something.” [Pause.]

[Show Slide 19.] Ok, now that we know the meaning of “yearned,” let’s revisit a key phrase in the paragraph - “her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession.” What is the author saying about Della here? [Pause.] He is saying that she had only ever craved or longed for the item but she never thought it was possible to ever possess it. It was in a Broadway store and it was too expensive! But now, thanks to Jim, they’re hers! Ok, let’s see what she does next.

[Show Slide 20.] “But she hugged them to her bosom, or her chest, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!””

[Show Slide 21.] So when the text says that she hugged the combs to her bosom, her chest, what does that non-verbal language mean? What does that body language tell you? [Pause.] That she really loved the gift and she considers it dear to her heart!

[Show Slide 22.] **And then she says to Jim - “My hair grows so fast!” Why would she say that? [Pause.] Because she wants to encourage him! He obviously knows now that her hair is cut off and she can’t use the combs like she would have with longer hair. But because she loves him and the gift means a lot to her, she is trying to encourage him and tell him that the gift will be useful soon, because hair always grows back! Let’s add this part to our characterization notes for Della on our graphic organizer.**

[Show Slide 23.] **Be sure to note specifically Della’s positive outlook despite the nature of the situation. [Pause.] Let’s see what she does next:**

[Show Slide 24.] **“And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, “Oh, oh!””**

Wait, what? What is a singed cat? Do you know what “singed” means? It means “slightly burnt or scorched.” Let’s add that word to our vocabulary section on the graphic organizer.

[Show Slide 25.] **“Singed” means “slightly burnt or scorched.”**

[Show Slide 26.] **You know how you react when you get burned. If a cat got burned, I’m guessing it would give a loud shriek! So let’s think about what the author is doing here. What literary device is he using? [Pause.] A simile! He said she shrieked “like a singed cat.” Remember a simile is a comparison that uses “like” or “as.” You have that much in your notes.**

Let’s add to the “meaning” section of “simile” in our notes. Why would the author use a simile here? [Pause.] Because he wants you to see her jump up like a cat and hear a crazy loud screech! You may not know exactly what a singed cat sounds like but you can imagine it! Using a simile instead of ordinary language can bring a certain scene in a story to life. It helps you imagine it better. Let’s add that to our notes in the graphic organizer.

[Show Slide 27.] **In the space labeled “meaning” beside “simile,” add that using a simile instead of ordinary language can bring a scene to life and help you imagine it better.**

But why did Della leap up and scream? Let’s read further to see.

[Show Slide 28.] **"Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit."**

Ok, so that makes sense. She was excited to give him the present! The platinum fob chain!

[Show Slide 29.] **It says that she held it out to him in her open palm, and the metal, the platinum, seemed to flash "with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit."**

[Show Slide 30.] **Let's add a new word to our vocabulary section on the graphic organizer. The word "ardent" means "enthusiastic or passionate." [Pause.]**

[Show Slide 31.] **Now that we know the meaning of "ardent," what does the author mean when he says the platinum metal seemed to flash "with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit"? [Pause.] I think he is saying the metal reflected brightly and this represented Della's spirit. But what is the deeper meaning here? In making the connection between the reflection of the metal and the description of Della's spirit, the author is saying that the gift is also a true representation of Della. It is an authentic gift from her heart to Jim. This is a great example of a key detail to add to our notes on the graphic organizer.**

In the "key details" section, summarize in your own words what we just discussed –

[Show Slide 32.] **Essentially, the author makes a connection between the reflection of the metal and her spirit, and this makes the connection for the reader that the gift is an authentic gift that represents her true inner self. [Pause.] Thank you. Let's continue reading!**

[Show Slide 33.] **"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."**

[Show Slide 34.] **Well, that's an old word I haven't heard in a while. A "dandy"! When Della says, "Isn't it a dandy, Jim?" that's an old fashioned way of saying, "Isn't it something special?" She tells him she's hunted all over town to find it and he'll be so proud to check his time in public. He won't**

have to use the old leather strap for his watch anymore.
Let's see how he reacts:

[Show Slide 35.] "Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled."

Wait, what? That's a weird reaction! Why doesn't he want to put it on his watch to try it out? The text says he smiled so we at least know he's happy! Let's see what he says:

[Show Slide 35.] "Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

What?? This is crazy! They both sold their most prized possessions - Della's hair and Jim's watch to get each other really nice Christmas gifts. But neither one can use the present that they received because each present connects to the prized possession they sold to buy a gift for the other person! What a crazy twist! Della can't use her combs because she cut her hair to buy Jim a fob chain for his watch. And Jim can't use the fob chain because he sold his watch to buy Della combs. But it's hard for them to be upset in this situation when they both loved each other so much that they were willing to sacrifice their most valued possession to get a nice gift for each other! Let's finish reading the story, though, as we have several things to unpack before we close for the day.

[Show Slide 36.] "And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house."

Ok, so notice here in the story that the narrator of the story is taking a step back. He's using the literary device we talked about yesterday, direct address. It's kind of like a storyteller who tells the story and then stops and talks about the story he or she just told. That's what the narrator is doing here. It's like he is talking directly to you now.

There are a couple of new words here we should define before figuring out what he means. Let's write both of these words and their definitions in your graphic organizers.

[Show Slide 37.] First, there is the word “related” which can mean “to tell something.” You’re probably familiar with another meaning of this word: “connected.” This new meaning, where you can “relate” a story to someone, isn’t very commonly used anymore. [Pause.]

[Show Slide 38.] Second, there is the word “chronicle,” which is another word for “story.” [Pause.] So when the author here says he “related” to us a “chronicle,” he simply means that he told us a story. But what about? Let’s look at the sentence again.

[Show Slide 39.] “And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house.”

[Show Slide 40.] Notice that he calls “two foolish children.” Why would he call them children? I mean, they are young. We know Jim was in his early twenties but why would he call them children? What are some qualities that we associate with being a child? [Pause.] Being a child means you are immature. Innocent. That you have a lot to learn. Maybe even “foolish” at times? The author calls Della and Jim “foolish children” here. Does that seem a bit harsh?

[Show Slide 41.] He says they “unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house.” I mean, that much is true. They did do that, but they did it out of love for each other! But maybe the author hasn’t finished his thought, so let’s see what else he says.

[Show Slide 42.] “But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.”

[Show Slide 43.] And that’s the end of the story. Notice that earlier he called Jim and Della “foolish children” but now he is calling them “the wisest.” But those seem like opposites! Let’s take a look at all of it together. Listen closely because I’m going to ask you what you think the author is trying to say with all of it.

[Show Slide 44.] “And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of

these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.”

Again, the author goes from describing Jim and Della as “foolish children” to calling them “the wisest” and comparing them to the “magi,” the historical figures known for wisdom and gift-giving. Take a moment and write some thoughts on some scratch paper about what you think the author means by saying all of this. [Pause.]

[Show Slide 45.] Ok, here is what I think the author means. Della and Jim could certainly be accused of being a little short-sighted and maybe “foolish” in selling their most prized possessions for a Christmas present. But on the other hand, they are also very wise because they expressed their love through great sacrifice. And even though it didn’t work out with the gifts in the end, they both demonstrated how deeply they loved each other! So they were kind of foolish but also really wise and it worked out great in the end!

What I just discussed here is an important theme in the story. Now that we have finished the story, we should take a minute and add some notes to what we learned in the plot today. Then we will discuss themes. Be ready to add notes to the plot and theme sections in your graphic organizer. Let’s start with plot.

In the plot section, jot down some notes about the sequence of events that happened in our story today. [Pause.]

[Show Slide 46.] Ok, here is what I have in my notes. Della received some nice combs from Jim that she had been wanting for a really long time. She had seen them on Broadway in New York City so she knew they were expensive and that Jim put in great effort to get them. Della gave Jim his gift of the fob chain. Jim just smiled because he knew that he had sold his watch to buy Della’s gift and so he could not use the chain with it.

I’ll pause a bit longer to give you time to write in your notes. [Pause.] Thank you. Now, let’s take a moment to talk about themes.

[Show Slide 47.] Remember a theme is a central idea that threads through a story—a message from the author to the reader. It is expressed as a complete thought and can be

<p>applied to real-life situations outside of the story. For example, one theme I identified in this story is the theme we talked about just a few moments ago - that love can lead us to be foolish at times but it always makes us wiser in the end.</p> <p>[Show Slide 48.] Take a moment to add that theme to the “themes” section on your graphic organizer. [Pause.] Notice how the theme I wrote down applies to this story, but it is also an idea that applies to real life too. What other themes did you notice in the story? Take a few moments and add those themes to this section too. [Pause.]</p> <p>[Show Slide 49.] Here are a couple more themes that I added to my notes. See if they match up with yours. If not, feel free to add them to your notes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True love requires selfless behavior. [Pause.] • Happiness requires love, not money. [Pause.] 	
<p>Guided Practice (6 min)</p> <p>Ok, before we close for today, let’s review our notes for our graphic organizer. As I read what I have in my notes, please add anything that you don’t already have to your notes.</p> <p>What did you have for Della? [Pause.] Do you remember when Jim gave her the combs she couldn’t use, and although she was sad for a minute the first thing she said was that her hair would grow back really quickly?</p> <p>[Show Slide 50.] Because of that I wrote for her that She has a positive outlook on life even when things may not have happened as expected. [Pause.]</p> <p>Okay, and what notes do you have for plot—the events of the story? Check to see whether your notes capture everything that happened in the part we read today. Here’s what I have:</p> <p>[Show Slide 51.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Della received some nice combs from Jim that she had been wanting for a really long time. She had seen them on Broadway in New York City so she knew they were expensive and that Jim put in great effort to get them. Della gave Jim his gift of the fob chain. Jim just smiled because he knew that he had sold his watch to buy Della’s gift and that he could not use the chain with it. [Pause.] <p>Let’s look at vocabulary next. We wrote down several words and their meanings today. Do you have all of these in your notes?</p>	<p>Students review their notes and consolidate their understanding of the text in preparation for writing about its themes for independent practice.</p>

<p>[Show Slide 52.] [Pause.]</p> <p>Then there's the section on literary devices. We talked mostly about similes today—remember Della shrieking like a singed cat?</p> <p>[Show Slide 53]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the meaning part for “simile,” I added that using a simile instead of ordinary language can bring a scene to life and help you imagine it better. [Pause.] <p>Two more sections. What did you have for “key details”?</p> <p>[Pause.]</p> <p>[Show Slide 54.] Here's what I wrote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broadway reference - the combs were bought on Broadway which means they were expensive and that he sacrificed to buy them, much like Della sacrificed to buy her gift [Pause.]• Connection between the reflection of the platinum and Della's spirit - shows the reader that the gift of the platinum fob chain was an authentic gift that represents Della's true inner self [Pause.] <p>As with all of these sections, you may have written other things too. But make sure you at least have these two.</p> <p>[Pause.]</p> <p>Finally, in the themes section, here's what I have:</p> <p>[Show Slide 55.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Love can lead us to be foolish at times but it always makes us wiser in the end. [Pause.]• True love requires selfless behavior [Pause.]• Happiness requires love, not money [Pause.] <p>We're going to talk more about themes in a minute, so make sure you have these written down! [Pause.]</p>	
<p>Independent Work (1 min)</p> <p>Let's reflect on today's lesson. Today we learned about the moment when Jim and Della exchange gifts, only to find out that their sacrifices to buy the gifts make the actual gifts somewhat pointless. But in the end, it was about them sharing love! Ok, for your independent work today, please respond in writing to the following prompt:</p> <p>[Show Slide 56.] Students, please write the prompt down on your notebook paper so you will have it handy for when you are responding in writing.</p>	<p>Students prepare to respond to a writing prompt that asks them to use everything they have learned about the story, especially the plot twist and author's commentary at the end, to identify two of its themes and explain how they are conveyed.</p>

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<p>In an essay, identify two key themes that emerged from the story of “The Gift of the Magi.” Explain in detail how the author used various tools to develop these themes - tools like characters, vocabulary, key details, literary devices, etc. Use specific details from the text to support your analysis and use at least three vocabulary words from our lesson today. [Pause.]</p>	
<p><u>Closing</u> (1 min) Thank you. I enjoyed reading the short story, “The Gift of the Magi,” with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. Bye!</p>	

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